

# The Feast of Passover

The word Passover is *Pesach* (Hebrew) or *Pascha* (Greek). *Pesach* occurs **49** times in the OT and closely resembles the Egyptian word *pesh* which means 'to spread wings over', i.e. to defend or protect (see use of the root word in Isaiah 31.5). What delightful meaning this brings to the words of the Lord Jesus in **Luke 13.34**: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!* The Greek word *Pascha* occurs **29** times in the NT including **1 Corinthians 5.7**: *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*. This is Divine sanction for considering the Passover as a type of the death of Christ, the Lamb of God. The historical Passover only occurred once in Egypt (Exodus 12). Every Passover celebrated since was a memorial (Exodus 12.14). This reminds us of the truth that Calvary was a once for all event that Christians remember today in the memorial feast of the Lord's Supper.

## The Setting of the Feast (vv.1-2)

**Exodus 12.1-2**: *And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you*. This feast marks the commencement of God's work to restore creation rest disturbed by sin. Calvary is where He begins. Why were the Passover and the slaying of the lamb necessary? God is going to redeem His people and claim them as His own, but they were sinners (Numbers 11.4-5); they had worshipped the gods of Egypt (Exodus 32.4, Joshua 24.14). How could they be forgiven without impugning the righteousness of God? Through the sacrifice of the Passover lamb (cf. Romans 3.25-26). The wages of sin is death and so death visited every house in Egypt (Exodus 12.30); either the death of the firstborn *or* the death of the lamb. God made a difference between the Egyptians and the Israelites, not on the basis of personal merit, but redemption by blood through faith (Hebrews 11.28). On the basis of blood of the lamb God can now 'begin again' (v.2). **2 Corinthians 5.17**: *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*. Passover marked the birthday of the nation and the beginning of their history as Jehovah's redeemed people. There was redemption *and* regeneration. The people now went forth from Egypt to live for God thus they are called a 'congregation' (v.3) for the first time. They are now a called out and assembled company and all is based upon the foundation of the blood.



## The Selection of the Lamb (v.3)

**Exodus 12.3**: *Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house*.

The word 'lamb' actually signifies 'one from a flock' and so a young lamb or goat could have been taken (see v.5). These notes will emphasise the lamb as it is the only sacrificial animal that becomes a title of the Lord Jesus (Lamb of God). A lamb was appropriate *historically* (the patriarchs had used them as sacrifices, Genesis 22.22), *practically* (the Israelites were shepherds and so lambs would have been readily available to them) and *typically* (speaks of the meekness, gentleness and submissiveness of the Lord Jesus as He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, Isaiah 53.7).

The study of the lamb in Scripture is most delightful. The Lamb was provided for: one **Person**, God Himself (Genesis 22.8), a **family** (Exodus 12.3), a **nation** (Exodus 29.38-43), the whole **world** (John 1.29) and the **universe** (Revelation 5.12-14). Christ meets the need of all. Although on the Passover day there must have been thousands of lambs slain, yet throughout Exodus 12 the lamb is spoken of in the singular. There is ever one Lamb before God. Each man was to take 'a lamb' (v.3) which is then called 'the lamb' (v.4) and finally 'your lamb' (v.5). We have a Saviour (Luke 2.11) who is also *the* only Saviour (John 4.42) and personally we can call Him *my* Saviour (Luke 1.47).

The lamb was selected on the **tenth** day of the month and kept until the fourteenth day so the family might appreciate its perfections. The number **ten** speaks of human responsibility (e.g. ten commandments). This pictures mankind as having been tested throughout different dispensations, but each time proving a sinful failure. *Man is proven to be quite unable to meet the requirements that God laid upon him*. But now the unblemished lamb is selected and displayed. What a picture of the Second Man, the Lord Jesus. He was publically declared to be the unblemished Lamb at His baptism (Matthew 3.17); one whose life had been under the eye of God (answering to the first ten days of the month) and delighted Him in every respect. Now He moves out under the watchful gaze and scrutiny of men for a public ministry of three and a half years (answering to the four days watching, v.6).

So the life of the Lord Jesus was divided into two. The first thirty years were before the eye of God and the last three and a half years before the eyes of men. **Isaiah 53.2:** *For he shall grow up before him (eye of God) as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him (eyes of men), there is no beauty that we should desire him.* Men would love to have convinced the Saviour of sin, but not one flaw could be found (John 8.46). *It is worthy of note that the Lord Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the tenth day of Nisan (according to the calculations of Sir Robert Anderson, The Coming Prince) to great public adulation. Four days later He was on the cross.*

**The Sufficiency of the Lamb (v.4)**

**Exodus 12.4:** *And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.*

Each household was to select a lamb. If the household was too small to eat a whole lamb (reckoned in later years to be ten persons) they could share it with another household. *The house could be too little for the lamb, but never the lamb too little for the house.* Such is the **sufficiency** of the Saviour! God has purposed that none should perish (2 Peter 3.9). Consideration was to be made for the appetite and capacity of each householder. Not all believers have the same desires and longings after Christ. It is a matter of appetite and capacity. Appetite can be developed or diminished depending on the diet in which we indulge.

**The Specifics of the Lamb (v.5)**

**Exodus 12.5** *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats.*

The lamb, as a type of the Lord Jesus, must be 'without blemish', a word elsewhere rendered 'undefiled' (Psalm 119.1), 'sound' (Psalm 119.80) and 'perfect' (Ezekiel 28.15). Peter speaks of the Lord Jesus as a Lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1.19). Being 'without blemish' reminds us of a lamb in which no blemish had developed in its **life**. Being 'without spot' reminds us of the red heifer (Numbers 19) which must be **born** without a spot, i.e. completely red with no grey or white hair. The red heifer was without spot at birth. The lamb was without blemish in its life. Christ was born without spot and lived without blemish. He was born holy and lived holy. *Leckie: Morally Christ was altogether different to every other man. His body was impervious to disease, though He bore man's sicknesses sympathetically. His nature was impervious to sin, though He bore man's sins sacrificially, but was never tainted by them.* Note. The church is described as being presented to Christ in a coming day without spot and without blemish (Ephesians 5.27).

The lamb must be a 'male of the first year', i.e. the best of its kind. Here was a lamb in its prime and full vigour (representing the pride, joy and youth of the firstborn son) and reminding us that life was full in Christ until He laid it down of His own accord. Christ was never dying; He died in the fullness of His strength. **Psalm 102.24:** *I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days.*

